

**Proposal Title:**

*Interdisciplinary Research, Teaching and Assessment*

**Project Coordinator:**

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**Proposal Team Members:**

Pinky Wassenberg, Dean, College of Public Affairs and Administration/Professor, Political Science

Karen Kirkendall, Interim Director, Capital Scholars Honors Program/Associate Professor, Individual Option

Jonathan Isler, Assistant Professor, Sociology/Anthropology

Angela Winand, Assistant Professor, African-American Studies

Alysia Peich, Assistant Professor, Library Instructional Services

Debbie Parker, Clinical Instructor, CAP Scholars Honors Program

Vicki Perkins, Assistant Director, CAP Scholars Honors Program

Amy Spies, Coordinator of Student Support, CAP Honors Program

Tarah Sweeting-Trotter, Undergraduate Academic Adviser, Adjunct Instructor

Tracy Zeman, Adjunct Instructor

## I. Project Description

The purpose of the project is to encourage interdisciplinary research, teaching, and assessment among UIS faculty and students through faculty development seminars and an undergraduate research symposium. The project team seeks funds to bring to campus Dr. Allen Repko, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Texas at Arlington, and author of *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (SAGE 2008).

We anticipate a two-day stay for Dr. Repko during which he will participate in two key events for students and faculty. First, Dr. Repko will participate in the CAP Honors Freshman Symposium – an annual event where students enrolled in CAP 115, *Interdisciplinary Writing*, and CAP 123, *How Do You Know* present their final interdisciplinary research projects. The 2009 symposium is most notable because the students will be using Dr. Repko's textbook in their interdisciplinary writing course. Dr. Repko's involvement with the students will include attending their concurrent panel presentations and interacting with them as an audience member, informally dialoging with students during a luncheon, and formally addressing the entire CAP Honors Freshman class as the keynote speaker after the luncheon. In addition to the student-centered events of the symposium, Dr. Repko will lead two faculty development seminars. One seminar will target the CAP Honors faculty and address the topic of interdisciplinary teaching and assessment; a second seminar will include all UIS faculty who are interested in the topic of interdisciplinary research.

The project seeks to build on Dr. Repko's trip to UIS and the faculty and student events described above by encouraging faculty and students to attend the 2009 Association for Integrative Studies (AIS) Conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. UIS has a long association with AIS and hosted the annual conference in 2008. AIS is an organization with a 30-year history of promoting interdisciplinary and integrative scholarship and teaching, and consultants from AIS were instrumental in helping construct and refine the Capital Scholars Honors Program curriculum. Specifically, the project team would like to send 4 of the students who presented at the CAP Honors Symposium to share their presentations and classroom experiences at the 2009 conference. In addition, the team would like to provide scholarships for two faculty who attend either of Dr. Repko's seminars held at UIS and who will give papers at the AIS 2009 conference.

This proposal seeks funds for Dr. Repko's travel, expenses, and honorarium, two faculty scholarships, and four student scholarships.

A final layer of the project description includes an international dialogue. During the spring 2009 semester, students enrolled in CAP 115 section A will establish a global learning community with students enrolled in an interdisciplinary course at Utrecht University, an internationally renowned research university in The Netherlands. Students in courses at both universities will be using Dr. Repko's textbook and conducting interdisciplinary research. Students will be dialoguing throughout the semester via an electronic social network, and we anticipate the Dutch students and faculty joining the CAP Freshman Symposium events and the faculty development seminars via web-based technology. This part of the proposal incurs no costs for SAIG, although there may be some in-kind contributions of staff time for technology assistance.

The project promotes an opportunity for alliances to form among faculty from across disciplinary boundaries through a shared concern for excellence in interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and learning. Such a forum for dialogue is necessary and timely considering the rapid growth of our campus and academic programs. As a campus, we have grown beyond asking the basic questions such as "What is interdisciplinarity?" or "What is the merit of an interdisciplinary approach?" Because interdisciplinarity permeates the institution, through general

education curricula, academic programs, and faculty research interests and professional collaborations, we find faculty from diverse disciplines asking similar questions: “What are the most effective processes and practices of interdisciplinary research?” “How do we achieve integration in interdisciplinary coursework and research?” “How do we assess interdisciplinary student work?” “What are some best practices for helping students think in interdisciplinary terms and do interdisciplinary work?” “The faculty seminar led by Dr. Repko, an expert in the field of interdisciplinary studies, provides opportunity for a campus-wide dialogue on interdisciplinary practice.

In summary, the purpose of our proposal is to request support for an innovative faculty development opportunity and undergraduate scholarship endeavor. The Freshman Honors Symposium and the faculty seminars are a unique arrangement that will promote faculty and student interaction in ways that excel the pace of excellence in interdisciplinary teaching and learning. The total requested amount for the two day event is \$4,800.

## II. Project Goals & Expected Results

### A. Professional development for faculty as teacher-scholars

- a. Continuation of campus-wide dialogue on interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching, and assessment
- b. Opportunity to form liaisons across disciplinary boundaries
- c. Exploration of common ground among disciplines
- d. Encouraging campus community through dialogue about interdisciplinary integration
- e. Fostering interdisciplinary research and practice through funding for faculty presentations at the 2009 AIS Conference

### B. Contributions to student learning and scholarship

- a. Face-to-face interaction with and evaluation by Dr. Allen Repko (author of CAP 115 textbook)
- b. Producing interdisciplinary research through the process of writing, collaborating, and presenting their work at the CAP Honors Freshman Symposium
- c. Exposure to academic conference experience at UIS through the CAP Honors Freshman Symposium
- d. Opportunity to demonstrate interdisciplinary scholarship beyond UIS through participating in the 2009 AIS Conference

### C. Advancement of campus strategic planning goals

- a. Academic excellence in teaching and learning (Strategic Thrust 1 under Academic Excellence, Goal 1 of the UIS Strategic Plan)
- b. Academic excellence in scholarship (Strategic Thrust 2 under Academic Excellence, Goal 1 of the UIS Strategic Plan)
- c. Makes a difference in the world through a global learning community – combats ethnocentrism through exposure to other perspectives (Goal 3 of the UIS Strategic Plan)
- d. Strengthens campus culture through academic dialogue between faculty and faculty and students and the exploration of interdisciplinarity across the curriculum (Goal 5 of the UIS Strategic Plan)

### D. Scope of intellectual products

- a. Collaborative conference presentations at UIS and at AIS
- b. Web recording of events for global learning community and campus dissemination

## III. Collaborative Effort

The collaborative effort embedded in this project is multi-layered and the project team spans six disciplinary boundaries across two colleges within UIS. The project members include faculty, administrators, instructors, and student support staff.

The CAP Freshman Honors Symposium depends on interdisciplinary collaboration and a team-teaching environment. The symposium events and the faculty seminars provide much needed opportunities for faculty to share team-teaching experiences, best practices, successes, and failures. Particularly valuable is the time allotted for CAP faculty to engage in dialogue with Dr. Repko after teaching his textbook to students for a semester. The opportunity for feedback and conversation will prove beneficial to curricular changes and assessment practices.

Another layer of collaboration is the bridge between faculty teaching CAP Honors interdisciplinary courses and faculty teaching interdisciplinary courses in other units of the University. We anticipate the faculty seminar participants to include a wide array of faculty who are interested in similar teaching and scholarly endeavors. Such opportunity for dialogue among faculty across disciplinary boundaries reflects action step #1 in the first goal of the University's Strategic Plan in at least two ways: it provides faculty development opportunities to both full-time and part-time faculty and it encourages the work of faculty who engage in integrative teaching and scholarship.

A final layer of collaboration is the opportunity for faculty to engage in a dialogue about interdisciplinary research by sharing methods and practice in a forum facilitated by one of the most visible U.S. scholars of interdisciplinary studies. The faculty seminars create a rich environment for sparking collaborative projects and deep thinking about research methods.

#### IV. Academic Excellence

This project most clearly reflects action steps #3 and #5 of the Strategic Plan's academic excellence in teaching and learning thrust. First, the organized events provide space devoted to improving teaching and learning, and, through the expertise of Dr. Repko, our faculty and students will share a common experience. One of the goals of this project is to stimulate dialogue on interdisciplinary common ground. In addition to a campus-wide dialogue, the project provides a global perspective through the participation of faculty and students from Utrecht University, and therefore, promotes an international dialogue about teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the project reflects the commitment to research and reflects the second component of academic excellence, scholarship. In particular, the project reflects various action items from Strategic Thrust 2 of Academic Excellence. The project fosters undergraduate student research, as reflected in Action Step #9. Through the symposium, students have an opportunity to participate in an authentic academic conference experience at the undergraduate level. In addition, through the grant, four students will have the opportunity to share their research at an international conference. Through the seminars, faculty develop further expertise under the Boyer categories of scholarship of discovery and teaching.

#### Proposed Activities and Timeline

Tasks	Key Participants	2008		

		February		
Confirm Speaker	Debbie Parker	✓		
	CAP Office Staff	✓		
Organize Luncheon	CAP Office Staff	✓		
	Debbie Parker	✓		
Prepare Evaluation Instruments for Symposium and Seminars	Debbie Parker and Karen Moranski		✓	
	Project Team Members	✓		
Coordinate with Faculty at University of Utrecht	Debbie Parker	✓		
	Office of Undergraduate Education		✓	
Help Faculty and Students Make Arrangements for Attending AIS Conference	Karen Moranski			✓
	CAP Office Staff			
Prepare Symposium Program	Debbie Parker and GA			✓
	Office of Undergraduate Education			
Provide Progress Report and Financial Report	Karen Moranski and Debbie Parker			✓

A. Freshman Honors Symposium (Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-2:30)

Debra Parker, Coordinator of Honors Writing is the contact person for this event. The agenda includes the following:

- 9:00-9:20 Registration and light breakfast (UHB 2<sup>nd</sup> floor lobby)
- 9:30-12:30 Student concurrent panel sessions (UHB 2<sup>nd</sup> floor classrooms)
- 12:30-1:30 Luncheon (PAC Conference rooms C & D)

1:30-2:30 Keynote Speaker (Dr. Allen Repko)

B. Faculty Development Seminar (Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>)

Karen Moranski, Associate Vice-Chancellor of Undergraduate Education is the contact person for this event. The agenda includes the following:

Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 3:30-5:30 Seminar One - *Finding Common Ground in Interdisciplinary Teaching and Assessment (CAP Honors Faculty)*

Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> 10:00-12:00 Seminar Two – *Interdisciplinary Research Process and Practice (All UIS Faculty)*

### **Budget**

<b>Item</b>	<b>SAIG</b>	<b>UNIT Contribution</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Food for Symposium</b>		<b>\$1600</b>	<b>\$1600</b>
4/27 Light Breakfast		\$200 (CAP)	
4/27 Luncheon		\$1400	
		(\$250 CLAS; \$350 OUE; \$350 CPAA; \$450 CAP)	
<b>Guest Speaker Expenses</b>	<b>\$2000</b>		<b>\$2000</b>
Airfare	\$250		
Hotel	\$200		
Food	\$50		
Honorarium	\$1500		
<b>2 Faculty Scholarships toward conference</b>	<b>\$1150</b>	<b>\$350 (OUE)</b>	<b>\$1500</b>
Fees, travel, and hotel for the 2009 AIS Conference (\$750/faculty)			
<b>4 Student Scholarships toward conference</b>	<b>\$1650</b>	<b>\$350 (OUE)</b>	<b>\$2000</b>
Registration, travel, hotel, and meals for 2009 AIS Conference (\$500/student)			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$4800</b>	<b>\$2300</b>	<b>\$7100</b>

Note:

CAP = Capital Scholars Honors Program

OUE = Office of Undergraduate Education

CPAA = College of Public Affairs and Administration

CLAS = College of Liberal Arts and Sciences